

ATLANTIC

Repartee

LETTERS TO AND FROM THE EDITOR

"One War Is Enough"

Sir:

For many months I have been following the articles in your good magazine by Edgar L. Jones, whom I consider an outstanding young writer.

In the February issue I believe you have done the nation a great service by publishing his "One War Is Enough." As an ex-serviceman myself, with over three years in the Navy as an officer, I speak for many comrades in saying that Mr. Jones has expressed a very significant point of view relating to the military training problem and to our post-war attitude toward the rest of the world.

B. E. SAWYER
New York City

Sir:

As another implacable enemy of the "Old Guard," I join the ranks of those who say, "One war is enough." I compliment your magazine for publishing Edgar Jones's fearless attack and the more erudite attack following in the same issue, "Where Are We Headed?" by Henry Steele Commager.

As a veteran, I wish to "talk back," too. Although I was a State-side soldier because of physical disqualifications, I saw enough of military life to agree that in most respects it was "undemocratic, stupefying, favor-ridden" — in all, a bad environment.

The world appears to be in the throes of a widespread social conflict. Consciously or unconsciously, the "Status-Quoers," the "Old Guard," seem to be hanging on to their own. So far, the great masses of people, feeling, but unable to express coherently in a clear pattern, a force against the inequalities and insecurities of their environments, follow apathetically the leadership that is offered. Unable to express a plan in dynamic action, these masses still deaden their feelings in what is handed to them by the "Status-Quoers." These deadening factors consist of most commercial motion pictures, cheap literature, advertising, radio propaganda, newspapers of the Hearst level, commercialized religion.

We veterans who see the broad picture of social conflict and can express ourselves do not want another war. We believe the prospective "atom fodder" in many other countries feels as we do.

KARL W. HINKLE
New York City

Sir:

I consider "One War Is Enough" wholly untrue and entirely unworthy of publication. Its author seems to me as almost entirely bereft of even a semblance of true patriotism and equally devoid of qualities justifying him to be classed as an American. Why you would encourage him by paying him for such a scurrilous piece of fiction is something I can't even begin to understand, and why you would publish his slander, even if he presented his composition to you, passeth my comprehension.

ERNEST S. HARRINGTON
Dallas, Tex.

Sir:

Edgar L. Jones has made some extracurricular remarks which ought not to go unchallenged.

It was not the business of the Army and Navy during the war "to strike a clean blow for democracy by setting an example in non-discrimination against Negroes." It was the business of the Army and Navy to win the war, without multiplying their internal problems of administering a principle which the country as a whole, at peace, cannot resolve.

It was not the business of the Army and Navy during the war "to curb the dangerous rise of anti-labor sentiment among our men in uniform, or anti-Jewish prejudices." It was the business of the Army and Navy to win the war, without adding to the tremendous job of training men at new skills the task of spreading controversial propaganda, or even of combating racial prejudices, except as incidental to organizing a smoothly functioning group. This job should have had and did have high priority over the inculcation of democratic principles. Military in-

It is true that these members do not, by their denomination's action, have a vote on any question, but they do have a voice, and they are pledged to interpret the spirit of the United Lutheran Church to the Council, and of the Council to the United Lutheran Church.

While it may be a popular belief in ecclesiastical circles in America, certainly, Professor Bell knows better than to write: "Of all the churches, *only* [italics mine] the Roman Catholic Church has today what approaches an inner unity, a unity enforced by iron discipline which tolerates no contradictions." Without wishing to be acrimonious, or to inquire if a true inner unity can ever be enforced by iron discipline, every accurately informed person knows that there is a vital evangelical and confessional unity in the Lutheran Church. It is because of this strong and truly inner unity of the Lutheran Church that Professor Theodore G. Tappert of Philadelphia can write: "The Lutheran Church will bear increasing testimony in the Councils of American Christianity because Lutheranism is in its very nature ecumenical rather than sectarian and because American Protestantism as a whole is becoming more sober and realistic as it veers away from the earlier visionary program for a 'reunion of Christendom.'"

RUSSELL W. STINE
Muhlenberg College
Allentown, Pa.

Sir:

In a time when so much soothing sentiment is appearing in print ("There are no atheists in fox-holes," "the return to spiritual values," and so on), you have done thoughtful Christians a real service by publishing Dr. Bell's article. I have read a number of his books, and admire him because he is too honest, and too much the genuine prophet, to be a diplomat. In his article he put his finger on the fundamental question confronting Christianity—whether the faith is to survive in reality or in name. Despite their often admirable intentions and emotions, the neo-Christians owe their primary loyalty to the faith of Inevitable Progress and Pulling Yourself Up by Your Bootstraps; Christianity is for them a set of symbols, or a convenient vocabulary for expressing an attitude toward life that at many points is in direct contradiction to what Christianity has meant to most Christians throughout the centuries—and to Christ.

These words of praise do not come from a Fundamentalist. I have long been aware that the earth is round, and that it was created long before 4004 B.C. The issue is not between the people who believe the Bible from cover to cover, and those who have heard of Darwin. It is between the Modernists, who turned Christianity into a sentimental fable, and the people who are fighting to preserve the deeper insights and ultimately more fruitful truths of real Christianity.

CHAD WALSH
Beloit, Wis.

Sir:

There are all too few sympathetic and forceful critics within the church. However, I cannot agree with Dr. Bell when he seems to question whether

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Atlantic Repartee

I held the view that since "we owe it to ourselves" the public debt cannot be a burden no matter how large. This is wrong. Read Chapter IX in my *Fiscal Policy and Business Cycles*, and also Appendix A, Reply to Moulton, in my *State and Local Finance in the National Economy*.

That "we owe it to ourselves" and not to England, for example, is indeed enormously important, but I have never held that therefore the debt does not matter. The debt has both good and bad effects, which we need to appraise. It may be a real burden, depending upon how the bond holdings are distributed and who pays the taxes.

ALVIN H. HANSEN
Belmont, Mass.

Sir:

The difference between my interpretation of Professor Hansen's position and his own seems to hinge on a point of semantics. I did *not* attribute to him the view that the size of the public debt doesn't matter, or that its economic and social effects are only good. I did say that he believed that, *from the point of view of the national economy as a whole*, an internally held debt is not a burden. That Professor Hansen has maintained this can, I believe, be shown by quotation from his writings. For example:—

Still another common misconception is that the taxation required to service an internal debt is a drain on the total purchasing power of the national economy. . . . To see that such is not the case we have only to ask where the money goes when interest or principal payments are made. Obviously, it goes right back into the system, to the holders of the bonds. Some of these, in varying degrees, will be the same people who have paid the taxes; but at all events no purchasing power is lost. . . . The income of the community as a whole, available for expenditure on goods and services, is neither higher nor lower than it would be if there were no public debt. ("The Federal Debt and the Future," *Harper's Magazine*, April, 1942.)

I believe this line of reasoning definitely implies that whether the public debt is \$1.00, 50 billion dollars, 500 billion dollars, or more, the purchasing power available to the nation as a whole is unchanged. This is what I meant when I attributed to Professor Hansen the view that "the public debt, no matter how large it is, cannot be a burden to the nation as a whole because we who *owe* the debt also *own* it."

The point I tried to make in my article was simply that this whole position is a rather meaningless tautology, and, as such, superfluous to the liberal position on the public debt which both Professor Hansen and I support. I certainly did not intend to suggest that persons who had affirmed this tautology also favored continuous and infinite deficit spending.

I have yet to discover anyone who, when pinned down, actually favors such a policy.

LEO BARNES
New York City

"What About Church Unity?"

Sir:

I read with great interest Bernard Iddings Bell's article, "What About Church Unity?" in the January *Atlantic*. At last someone has had the courage to make the position of the dissenting churches clear. We hear so much of Roman tyranny and Protestant bigotry that it is refreshing to get a clear, unbiased picture of the situation.

Mr. Bell is to be commended on his handling of the Roman Catholic position. He made it clear that we of that faith are not opposed to coöperation between the various Christian sects because of any traditional animosity towards these sects, but because of the very nature of Roman Catholic doctrine. The strength and unity of the Roman Church lies in its unswerving policy against change in matters of principle. It claims to be in direct descent from Peter, and the only true teacher of Christ's doctrine. To enter into a Federation of Churches and bargain with them on which principles it is willing to concede to effect a reconciliation would be disastrous. It must remain aloof, but it can give moral support to any movement that has as its end the reawakening of Christianity in a world headed for ruin in the hands of the so-called "Liberals."

GEORGE GENT
New York City

Sir:

Bernard Iddings Bell has so excellently emphasized "the traditional Christianity common to both Catholicism and historic Protestantism," and has so penetratingly described Liberalism as another religion whose basic appreciation of nature, man, and God is essentially incompatible with the Catholic creed, that it is annoyingly disconcerting to have him make in his fine, positive, and incisive style serious misstatements. How can so learned a writer say: "Almost all the non-Roman Christian bodies have membership and coöperate in these federations [The Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America], with a few exceptions of which the Southern Baptists and the Lutherans are the only large ones"?

The United Lutheran Church in America, with a confirmed membership, as of December 31, 1944, of 1,284,806, coöperates with the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America in every major phase of the Council's activities. The United Lutheran Church has three members on the Executive Committee of the Council; has members on three standing committees of the Council's Executive Committee—namely, the Advisory Committee, the Nominating Committee, and the Publications Committee; and has members on the directive committees of nine of the departments conducted by the Federal Council.

the good sense and strong courage of the editors of the *Atlantic* for allowing, at so early a date, the true color of war stripped bare to dominate six pages of rugged reading.

Reprints of this stirring article should be sent to all Legion Posts and be read from every pulpit in the land.

FREDERIC WHITING PATCH
Framingham, Mass.

Sir:

On November 10 I wrote you asking why the *Atlantic Monthly* had not carried an article, or articles, against peacetime conscription, since you had published an article favoring it. You wrote on November 15 that you had not secured a satisfactory article but that you would keep on trying. Well, you certainly have succeeded. Thank you for "One War Is Enough." It is the most powerful argument against peacetime conscription that I have read.

REV. FRANK A. HAMILTON
Trinity Methodist Church
Evansville, Ind.

• Naturally no two persons saw the war, or even their segments of it, in the same way. I tried in my article to summarize what I had seen and heard in North Africa, at eighteen military installations in this country, on seventeen islands in the Pacific, and aboard three troop transports, two aircraft carriers, a cruiser, destroyer, command ship, seaplane tender, and countless smaller craft. If other men have found that my generalities did not fit their particular experiences, I applaud their timely corrections and also their good fortune in having served with outstanding officers and men. As an American and the father of a young boy, I am greatly encouraged by the slightest bits of evidence that some men discovered military training to be, in the words of the advocates of conscription, a fine education for "democracy and life." But from the letters, not for publication, which servicemen have sent to me personally, I remain convinced that my observations were pretty much those of the unvocal majority.

Those readers who construed my article as an attack on the decency of American manhood missed the whole point. I used American atrocities only as effective proof of the degenerating influence of war on all men, regardless of race, creed, color, or democratic background. I cannot blame the home front for being shocked, because censorship regulations during the war banned any mention of our own acts of bestiality, but anyone who knows war will assure the ivory-towered unbelievers that there was little room for Christian integrity in battle. The issue was not what Americans or any other troops did, but what the war did to them. — EDGAR L. JONES

"How Dangerous Is the Public Debt?"

Sir:

Mr. Barnes says in his article in the February *Atlantic*, "How Dangerous Is the Public Debt?" that



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Atlantic Repartee

doctrination is excellent training to develop the ability of an individual to work effectively in a group, be he leader or follower.

Distinction between officers and men exists. The idea of rank, though theoretically foreign to a democracy, is certainly not confined to the services. In civilian life its evidences and prerogatives are economic rather than symbolic, but it exists and it is not always justly assigned.

LT. CHARLES P. PRICE, USNR
FPO, New York City

Sir:

I have been intending for some time to write an appreciation of the *Atlantic*. I first began receiving the publication when I was flying from Guam with a B-29 Group, about a year ago. Isolation from the current of contemporary thinking was rather complete there, and the *Atlantic* went far toward filling the need I felt for identification with that current.

It was his extraordinarily discerning article on Tarawa which first impressed me with the work of Edgar L. Jones. No other correspondent I knew approached his comprehension and expression of the meaninglessness and hopelessness of the life led by those men who held down, and indeed are still holding down, those islands which the war abandoned, from Guadalcanal to the Marshalls.

Certainly Mr. Jones is to be congratulated for calling the attention of *Atlantic* readers to the facts about American war crimes which many a Pacific veteran already well knows. All the more puzzling, in the light of Mr. Jones's comprehension of these atrocities and their justification, is his failure to appreciate the necessity for certain injustices and inequalities he describes.

Now I find myself in sharper disagreement with him on his stand on peacetime conscription. His hatred of the Army Way—which is to say, the military way in any service—has obscured, it seems to me, his usual clear thinking. If he is making a straight report on GI gripes, he should make it clear that these are often as unreasonable as are some of their causes. All such things are relative: in one area enlisted men of the Navy may bitterly gripe about their officers' canopied theater, when at the same time on the same island wounded men of the Marine Corps are equally bitter about the lack of cots in their hospitals. Perhaps the former are justified. I was never able to sympathize wholeheartedly.

Inequalities in the distribution of supplies of all kinds among the various services are a little-mentioned but significant cause for the support, among certain of the military, of a merger of the armed forces. Mr. Jones's picture of officers' special privilege is exaggerated, if my experience is any criterion. I have seen all of his catalogue of abuses, but

I have never seen all or most of them at any one post nor have I seen any of them more than occasionally present.

And his inference that the armed forces are at fault for creating a glut of mechanics, chauffeurs, and radar operators ignores a fact I am sure he very well appreciates: that the winning of the war demanded the creation of that glut. Certainly he knows there wasn't time to make a seasoned engineer of every mechanic, radio operator, and truck driver.

When he says no attempt was made by the War Department to correct the rumor that Negroes were cowardly, he ignores the fine documentary film *The Negro Soldier*, one of the must items in the training-film series. And he ignores the extraordinary effort of some of the Army's higher brass to get Negro officers and men into aerial combat—an effort which met more determined opposition, I suspect, in Congress than in the War Department.

In his statement that the Army joined readily in Senator Taft's pre-election plan to bar political reading from troops, he ignores the many protests which Washington brass registered at the time. Congress made the possibility of unwitting commission of the crime so great and the penalty so severe that it should not seem surprising that the War Department, though hardly willingly, enforced the rule perhaps more rigidly than had been intended.

It will seem that it is very easy for an ex-Army man to say it was the Navy which practiced so extensively the abuses to which Mr. Jones refers. Yet one is driven to believe that its exaggerated distinctions between "officers and men," a distinction which sometimes amuses the latter, have created much of the objection that is heard. The Navy's rigid policy of excluding non-college men from its officer ranks, its greater discrimination against Negroes, the wider gap between commissioned and enlisted facilities and privileges, the unnecessary elegance of even forward area appointments for Navy officers, all aroused envy and/or enmity in its own enlisted personnel, and among officers and men of the Marine Corps and Army.

It may very well be that the United Nations will be so successful that no nation need ever again concern itself with the machines and techniques of mass murder. No effort to that end would be too great. But I haven't so complete an assurance yet that war cannot come that I am willing to see the United States military installation become inadequate to meet not only its possible demands but even its present commitments. Since extension of the draft, a peacetime conscription of youth, and the expenditure of much money and effort are necessary to meet those needs, then meet them we must, by all these or any other rational means.

ROSS H. SNYDER
New York City

Sir:

One vote against peacetime conscription and for "One War Is Enough." I was pleasantly amazed at

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much good can come from healing of the divisions between denominations. Neither can I agree with him that "most of the denominations cooperate satisfactorily and increasingly in good works." With differing creeds, leaders, traditions, administrations, and organizations, it is, unfortunately, not that simple, even though admittedly good progress is being made. Moreover, because there are no "short cuts to corporate union," it is all the more important to do first things first, which means starting with cooperation.

We cannot wait for organic unity or for the time necessary to bridge the various denominational "schisms," to which Dr. Bell makes reference. We must start where we are, with what we have, and where leaders and laymen will begin. In cooperation, the conciliar method is a constructive answer for the churches, by which they may undertake certain corporate tasks together on the community level. This approach was devised by the denominations and churches themselves, to specialize in doing together those things which none can do so well alone. This method creates a functional unity which radiates great Christian power and influence. It also preserves Protestant Christian freedom, the importance of which Dr. Bell seems to minimize.

ELLIS H. DANA
Executive Vice-President
Wisconsin Council of Churches
Madison, Wis.

From Holland

Sir:

I recently had occasion to have a look in some American periodicals, among them your widely distributed magazine. After so many years of suppression of free opinion, it was quite a revelation! So many pages thick, a contents up to date and worth reading, so many interesting pictures, so many tempting announcements, partly colored, inviting us to all kinds of delicious things and reminding us of the good old days, long, long ago.

"American-minded" as I am, I was eagerly tempted to subscribe to your magazine, for none of the present publications in my country can stand comparison with yours; but, unfortunately, there are several obstacles preventing me from doing so: —

1. The legal stipulations as to foreign financial transactions do not permit the remittance of Dutch money to foreign countries.

2. The recent measures for the reorganization of our currency are practically compelling us to restrict our expenses to the strict minimum cost of living. Thus, I even cannot afford to pay the subscription fee, however small the amount may be.

In spite of this, would there not be however a possibility to receive your magazine regularly? If, for instance, one of your numerous readers would be willing to send me a copy every time after having read it himself. In return, I am gladly disposed to send stamps for collection or something else in which he is particularly interested, to make inquiries, to supply economical, financial, or political information.

M. LAMERS
Egidiusstraat 85 III
Amsterdam W., Holland